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SOME FEATURES OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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[Paper presented before the Montana State Teachers' association, December 28, 1895, at the annual conference at Anaconda. Reprinted from *Montana Educator*, April, 1896.]

More and more, interest is everywhere being shown in means for bringing public libraries and public schools into closer relations. Librarians are inquiring how they can make the library of more service to teachers and pupils, and superintendents and teachers are devising ways of using the resources of the library so as to make its influence more effective in the lives of pupils. Many means are being used for bringing the work of the public library and the work of the public school into closer and more intimate connection. I purpose in this paper to make brief mention of some of these means now employed in our own city and elsewhere.

The best general plan that I know of is one that is in very successful operation at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "The teacher comes to the library and selects from the shelves a number of books, in proportion to the size of her class, i. e., 50 pupils—50 books. These are sent to the schools, and issued by the teachers for home use. The selection is made from all branches of literature—mythology, science, useful arts, fine arts, poetry, history, travel, biography, fairy stories, stories of adventure, etc." Each pupil is provided with a borrower's library card in the regular way. In this manner 43,000 books were loaned in 1894. A full account of the Milwaukee plan may be found in the Educational Review for November, 1894, written by the superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools. By practically the same method the number of loans was 16,000 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and 38,000 in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1894. A similar plan is in operation in many cities.

Among the public libraries there is now a tendency to provide a department for young people. At the Minneapolis public library there are in this department about 10,000 volumes. A person specially fitted for the work is in charge of the department. The children are allowed to go to the shelves and select for themselves, there being some supervision on the part of the lady in charge. The young people are

attracted to this department because the books and periodicals of interest to them are to be found there. They are not excluded from the other departments of the library. The plan has been in operation about two years and the librarian considers the results excellent. There are many other plans which might be mentioned.

In Helena, the public library is much hampered by lack of funds. Too small a building and rush of work make it impossible for us to do all we wish to do. Teachers seem ready and willing to make good use of such library facilities as we have. The library staff desires to co-operate with them to the fullest possible extent. Children in the public schools are learning to use the public library by actual use. Teachers send pupils to the library to ascertain certain facts, and they thus learn the use of reference books. They come to find answers to questions that will introduce them to the books of history, economics and the trades and practical arts. They are sent to get certain books to read that will introduce them to the great literature of the world. Pupils are sent to get books of travel to read in connection with their geography lessons, and the same with reference to other school studies. Teachers get books in order to read them to their pupils, and in order to awaken the interest of pupils in the books by

showing the illustrations, reading extracts, talking about them, etc. Teachers get books to help them in their own work of presenting their pupils with interesting facts in botany, zoology, mineralogy, etc.

There is great gain in all the possible ways of using the library with definite ends in view. If a teacher wishes to come to the library with her class in order to examine all the histories, the pictures and the reference books relating to the history of England in the time of Henry VIII, we want she should have every possible facility for doing so; for the library should be just such a laboratory. If a teacher wishes to come to the library with her class in order to examine the best books on economics, tell her class the special merits and demerits of each, tell them the standing of the authors in the world of thought and on which side of the question each has written, tell them which books are the latest contributions to the subject, which are clear in style and lucid in thought, which are for the beginner and which are for the advanced student—if she wishes thus to spread forth to her pupils the literature of the subject in discriminating fashion, we want she should come and have every needed opportunity; for books are tools and the library is a workshop, the uses of which cannot be too well taught or learned. If a teacher comes to us and says: “In our class for the next four weeks we

are to make special use of Emerton's Middle Ages; can you make one of your copies a reference book for that length of time, so that every pupil will have a chance to use it?" our reply would most certainly be an assent. And so we ever try to co-operate with the teacher in her plans.

The young people of Helena are learning better and better how to use the public library. About 15 per cent of our books are books for the young. We wish that the percentage were larger. The use of these keeps increasing, and it is now about one third of the whole use. We take great pains in the selection of the books we buy for young people. There is some light reading, but bad books are excluded, so that the future increase in this proportion of use of books for the young will be as gratifying to us as has been the past increase.

The Helena public library has issued two bulletin lists of young people's books. Both of these lists have been something more than mere lists. Descriptive notes have been given in connection with each title, intended to give to the reader a better idea of the book and its author than the title alone would convey. One of these lists was issued in June, 1894, and the other in December, 1895. In the latter bulletin I have had a few words to say about the reading of young people, and have mentioned and character-

ized seven valuable lists of books for the young. The best of these lists are mentioned first and are quite inexpensive. It would be well for the teacher to own them. It is hoped that this second bulletin list of books for young people may prove to be as useful to teachers and pupils as the former list seemed to be. There was a large call for the former bulletin, both at home and outside of the city and state. Copies of both may be had on application.

I would like to call attention to three little books, not lists, that I am sure would prove helpful and inspiring to many a teacher. These are:

1. Literature in school, by Horace E. Scudder, 1888. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 15 cents.) Mr. Scudder was formerly a teacher, has written good books for young people, and has given this matter lifelong attention.

2. On the study of literature, a university extension address in London in 1887, by John Morley. (Macmillan & Co., 50 cents.)

3. The choice of books, by Frederic Harrison, 1888. (Macmillan & Co., 75 cents.)

Teachers have the opportunity to acquire a very keen sense of the needs of their pupils. They get acquainted with them individually, study the nature of each child, and come to the library for co-operation. Mr. James M. Sawin, principal of one of the

grammar schools of Providence, Rhode Island, speaks from an experience of 27 years in guiding the reading of pupils. He is described as a man whose "choice of a book for a given purpose is made with as minute care as a surgeon would use in selecting his instruments." It is his belief "that reading of some kind on the part of the pupil is inevitable; and that it is simply a question whether the teacher shall use the unequalled opportunity in his hands, for diverting the stream of reading into the channels of the best literature or not." Nearly all children easily gain a taste for good literature, if they only get the right start. After their tastes are formed otherwise, it may be a difficult matter to effect the desired change. The whole question of a taste for good literature is largely the problem of children's reading. I want to quote to you a striking statement from the experienced pen of Mr. Horace E. Scudder. It is in the Atlantic monthly for February, 1894, (v. 73, p. 257), in an article entitled "The educational law of reading and writing." "There can be no manner of question that between the ages of six and sixteen a large part of the best literature of the world may be read, if taken up systematically in school, and that the man or woman who fails to become acquainted with great literature in some form during that time is little likely to have a taste formed later."



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